



Guidance: National Media during an Emergency

Created by the Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response and The Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Guidance for working with the national media in an emergency:

1. Follow your communication plan
2. The more information you share proactively on your social media and website accounts the fewer calls and contacts you will have. Make sure all media know where to find the most current updates.
3. The most important - take care of your LOCAL media first. The national media will be gone as soon as something else comes up - like Hurricane Juquin hitting shore in New York. The local reporters will be there for the next months and years.
4. Bring in public information officer support early and provide talking points that your joint information center or group of PIOs can share for you.
5. Make sure you have people monitoring for accuracy and rumors.
6. Connect with all PIOs from agencies supporting this incident so that information remains consistent.....even if this is just an email group, text group or conference call to get everyone on the same page.

Additional guidance for working with any media during an emergency:

Build Trust and Credibility

- Empathy and caring
- Competence and expertise
- Honesty and openness
- Commitment and dedication

Tips

- Don't over reassure
- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Express wishes ("I wish I had answers.")
- Acknowledge people's fears
- Explain any process in place

As a spokesperson

- Know your organization's policies
- Stay within the scope of responsibilities

- Tell the truth, be transparent
- Embody your agency's identity

Prepare to answer these questions

- Who is in charge?
- Why did this happen?
- What can we expect?
- Was there any forewarning?
- When did you begin working on this?
- What does this information mean?

Stay on message

- "What's important to remember is..."
- "I can't answer that question, but I can tell you..."
- "Let me put this in perspective..."